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[by Philip Bancroft]
See 4. & L A

L E T T E R

FROM THE

C O C O A - T R E E

TO THE

COUNTRY-GENTLEMEN.



L O N D O N :

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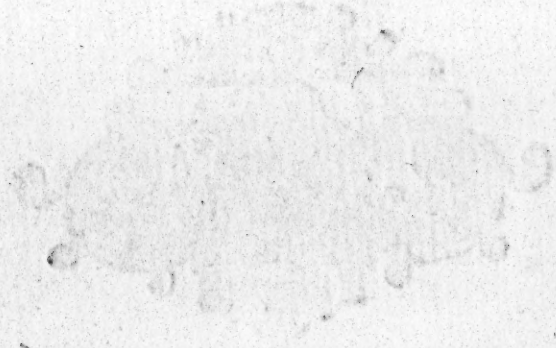
THE GREAT BRITAIN

FROM THE

GOVERNMENT OF GREAT BRITAIN

TO THE

COUNTY OF GLOUCESTER



LONDON

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1801

Price 1s.



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L E T T E R, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

ENGAGED to you by every sentiment of affection and esteem; united with you in the same political principles and ideas of the constitution; I need not profess my zeal for your interests and honour. I have always acted with you, and can now look back with pleasure on our past conduct. I find it steady and uniform, except in one instance, when we were first insensibly engaged, and afterwards as insensibly carried too far in support of the war in Germany. I make this acknowledgment, without apprehension of offending, as I know your opinions upon that subject. But a new and extraordinary crisis of affairs is coming forward, which will call upon us to maintain the integrity of our political principles and character. I am therefore desirous to lay before you such reasons, as, in my opinion, ought to influence our future conduct and engagements, with regard to the strange things that are passing here.

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An opposition is forming against the measures of government. Such is the language of some people to express a personal dislike to ministers, or a contest for power, for places and employments. Could I think it perfectly decent, I would rather call the present opposition a formed design against his MAJESTY'S independence, and liberty in exercising the most constitutional prerogatives of his crown. The declared and avowed intention of the great persons engaged in it, is to command the present reign, and dictate to their Sovereign ; *humbly* to inform him, to whom he shall give, not only the direction of the public affairs, but even his private affection and esteem.

Two noble persons, and a third, still more noble, have declared themselves the patrons and leaders of this opposition. The two first appear in support of the whig interest, and the old English families, formerly distinguished by that denomination. They complain, that the tories, by which title they mean to distinguish the country-gentlemen, to whom I am writing, are received by the present administration, into offices of trust and confidence ; or what, perhaps, in spite of the spirit of resigning, they more resent, into places of profit in the state. Thus have they revived those unhappy distinctions, under which our fathers were enlisted,

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and engaged in almost civil war. The noble persons would renew this war, and, in contradiction to all constitutional principles, would narrow the bounds of majesty, and confine its cares, its attention, and its bounty, to a part, which ought to be diffused through the whole, of the nation. Thus would they make their sovereign, in Hamlet's language, a king of shreds and patches, instead of the common father and monarch of his people.

Another of their complaints is truly most unaccountable; that his MAJESTY, in proof of his first declaration to his parliament, is indeed a Briton; true to the interests of his native country, and uninfluenced by any predilection for Hanover. An attachment to German measures was the deepest stain of the two late reigns. When his present MAJESTY came to the throne, he found us involved in a continental war, to which the dearest interests of this nation had been sacrificed. The dignity and honour of the kingdom were ignominiously abandoned, by treaty, to the insolence and arrogance of the King of Prussia. May no such treaty ever appear again, to stain and darken the glory of the British annals! In this situation, our sovereign, gracious and good, would have given up Hanover to the welfare of his native country. He would have put an end to the

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German war. Impossible. He would have recalled his British troops. Impracticable. This continental mischief hung, like a dead weight, immoveable, upon all the other operations of the war. It lay equally heavy upon the negotiations of peace, and emboldened our enemies to refuse us those terms, which we had a right, from our successes in every other part of the world, to demand. But, if the noble persons have founded their opposition upon these complaints against their sovereign, what wonders of political architecture may we not expect, when they raise the superstructure of faction upon such a foundation?

But, in truth, what do they propose? That one of them should indulge his natural disposition, and please himself with the hopes of finding his account in tumults and confusion; in parliamentary disputes, and the riots of elections, is nothing wonderful. They may recal a momentary youth, and bring back to his imagination those illustrious scenes, in which he first displayed his political abilities. Experience then taught him the value of those active virtues, and habitude has confirmed him in his good opinion of their merit. Even age, and its unavoidable infirmities, have not convinced him of the breach of character, in engaging again in the contests of ambition with people, who are
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only entering on this busy tumultuous scene. I do not mean to blame, and I shall not presume to pity him. Whoever has not in himself, and his own understanding, the resources of retirement and self-enjoyment, is allowed to go abroad, at whatever indecent hour, for amusement and dissipation. His age, however, might justly startle the most sanguine spirits, that found their future hopes of ambition upon a life of more than threescore and ten. But some gentlemen, surely influenced, rather by a principle of gratitude, than any reasonable appearance of his success in this desperate project, have resigned their employments, useful at least, if not absolutely necessary to their œconomy. What have they to expect from a life of seventy years, animated by the short and wasting vigour of the rage of faction, and an unnatural ambition?

The second noble Person is of so different a character; so naturally an enemy to violent and precipitate councils, that it is amazing, by what influences he could be wrought to engage in the present system of opposition. He certainly does not foresee the unhappy consequences, into which he will unavoidably, and without a possibility of retreating, be led by these engagements. He, who loves his country, and reveres the constitution, is exposing them both to certain confusion, and, at
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least, probable distress. There is another circumstance, with regard to this noble Person, not a little singular. With all affection and reverence for his Majesty, he is entering into league and amity with a party, who are determined to distress his measures, and insult his administration.

It is wholly foreign to the design of this letter, to inquire into the circumstances, either of his resignation or dismissal. I hope, however, he does not think it the right of subjects, only, to resent, and that princes are to be insensible to the neglect of duty, and the indecent behaviour of their servants. But if the noble person founds his opposition upon the indignity, whether real or supposed, with which he has been treated, where shall we fix our ideas of virtue, particularly that first of virtues, the love of our country, when a man shall dare to avow his private resentment, as a justifiable reason for his opposing publick measures? Upon this plea, the late Lord Bolingbroke has justified his entering into the service of the Pretender, and his leaving it. “ But an ancient family is dishonoured by such an indignity.” What right has any man to plead the merit and services of his ancestors, who has himself deviated from that line of conduct, which they thought duty to their Sovereign?

But,

But, as I conceive, we are deeply interested in the conduct of this noble Person. We are therefore authorised to inquire into the motives of it, and I think we may rely upon the following account. He had early in life conceived some very exalted notions of the rights of whiggism to direct the administration, and to govern the Sovereign. He therefore could no longer hold an employment, by which he was obliged to the mortification of seeing the Tories, *sight hateful, sight tormenting*, received at court, upon equal terms of grace and favour with other subjects, in proportion to their personal merit, their birth and fortune. He was sometimes obliged by his office to introduce them to the Royal Presence.

The third noble Person feels it a matter worthy of his indignation, that his Sovereign will not again enter into his nonage, and submit himself to a second pillage. He would gain by force that power, with which neither the wisdom of his royal Father, nor the apprehensions of the people, would intrust him in the year 1751. But of what injuries does he complain? He has been treated, during the present reign, and more especially during the present administration, with every distinction due to his rank and relation to the crown.

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Even in the latest instance. When a plan was formed by the ministry for the reduction of the Havanna, it was immediately sent to Him for his approbation. The commander in chief was appointed according to his nomination. Every thing he asked, in order to secure the success of the expedition, was instantly complied with. The vigour of the ministry seemed to second his demands. Never were any troops better appointed. Upon what pretence of complaint, therefore, can He enter into an unnatural alliance in opposition to the interests of his own family? What views of future power can tempt Him to join with a man, whom he most sincerely detests, to distress the crown, to which he is so nearly related? Is it Agrippina's impotence of ambition, *eo lædi, quia non regnaret*? Does he consider himself a Prince of the blood, and is this his proper conduct? Does he acknowledge himself a subject, and is this his proof of duty to his Sovereign? But, in truth, he is as much a subject to the crown, and, in all human probability, as far removed from the throne, as any private gentleman in England. Oliver Cromwell indeed rose to the tyranny of his country, as a private gentleman, and Richard the third, as an uncle.

We have often been reproached with our apprehension of military power. Whether those apprehensions were in themselves just, or not, we certainly were justified, in being watchful to repel even a possible danger, so formidable, indeed so fatal, to the liberty of our country. It is wisdom to foresee such danger; it is courage to meet it in its approach; it is our duty to die or to repel it. But now, what will they, who used to impute our fears to us as crimes; what will they say now? when the profession of the opposition is to govern the King absolutely; when the leader of that opposition is a military leader, who has hardly any other ideas of government, than what he learned in the German discipline, which our soldiers, unused to such severity, such cruelty, so sensibly felt, and so loudly resented. If this man comes into power by violence, he must maintain it by violence. Yet when he places himself at the head of faction, every officer, who has a seat in parliament, and joins under such a leader, in such a cause, must give us very serious apprehensions. We cannot look upon such a member of parliament, as a man merely following his own opinion in civil matters: whenever he succeeds, he becomes an instrument to oppress the liberty of a free people. But when this commander in chief both of the King
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and army shall pour abroad his spirit upon the soldiery
 ——The unhappy Roman, upon whom Sylla either forgot, or neglected to smile, was butchered by his guards.

Shall we then unite with Him in designs of such dreadful apprehension to the very being of the constitution? We have, in reproach, been called the dupes of many oppositions. Adhering to our common principles, we have despised such reproach. Yet, in honour to our understanding, let us not be the dupes to those, who invite us to join in our own destruction, and the destruction of whatever is most dear to us. But how does this noble person propose to himself a possibility of engaging us to support his opposition? By what methods does he propose to carry this extraordinary project into execution? By methods as extraordinary as the project itself. A certain right honourable gentleman is supposed to have a mighty influence over us. An influence powerful enough to turn us from our interest, our duty, and even our gratitude.

We have the highest opinion of the right honourable gentleman's abilities. His influence among us is acknowledged. But what arguments can possibly convince
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vince us, that we ought to engage in this most unnatural alliance? What eloquence seduce us, from our present honourable situation? We are here placed between the person of our sovereign, and the dangerous rage of party; between the prerogatives of his crown, appointed by the wisdom of the constitution, and the intrigues of precipitate ambition, joined with the arrogance of family, and led on by a spirit that delighteth in blood. If the prerogatives, granted to the throne by our ancestors, are either oppressive or dangerous to liberty, let them be legally taken away. But let it be well considered, before they are given to another part of the constitution, some of whom have already shewn their inclination to render themselves formidable to the liberty of their country. In proof of this assertion, three or four families have formed an opposition, that dares to threaten and insult their Sovereign. They have assumed to themselves, as most honourable, the no longer existing title of whigs; they have given to us, country-gentlemen, as most ignominious, the no longer existing name of tories.

I have not mentioned the folly, with regard to our interest, of uniting with these noble persons. I should think it almost an indignity to mention the word inte-

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rest to gentlemen, who, I am persuaded, will act upon other motives, those of principle and honour; of probity and a love for our country. Such have hitherto been the motives of our conduct, and surely nothing can hereafter be given us in exchange for our integrity; no recompence for the violation of that character, which we have always, and, I trust, we shall always maintain.

I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient servant.

